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SUBJECT: LIFE UNDER THE LTTE

1. SUMMARY. RECENT TRAVELERS TO JAFFNA REPORT THAT THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM (LTTE) CONTINUE TO SET UP CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN AREAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL. A TIGER POLICE FORCE HAS REPLACED THE REGULAR LTTE CADRES ON THE STREETS OF JAFFNA, TIGER COURTS ARE DISPENSING JUSTICE THROUGHOUT THE PENINSULA, AND A "BANK OF TAMIL EELAM" HAS BEGUN FUNCTIONING UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF A FORMER STATE BANK OFFICIAL. THE TIGERS ARE ALSO EMPHASIZING ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY BY ATTEMPTING TO PRODUCE SUBSTITUTES FOR ITEMS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S "BANNED" LIST. ON THE MILITARY FRONT, THE LTTE IS PREPARING FOR A POSSIBLE ARMY ASSAULT ON JAFFNA AND HAS THREATENED TO DISRUPT THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FOLLOWING REPORT IS BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH RECENT TRAVELLERS TO THE LTTE-CONTROLLED JAFFNA PENINSULA, INCLUDING THE COLOMBO-BASED BBC AND REUTERS CORRESPONDENTS AND THE JAFFNA-BASED BISHOP OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA.

3. RECENT TRAVELLERS TO JAFFNA WERE STRUCK BY THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE LTTE HAS SET UP ITS OWN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN NORTHERN SRI LANKA. GONE ARE THE TRUCKLOADS OF HEAVILY-ARMED TIGERS WHO PATROLLED THE STREETS OF JAFFNA AS RECENTLY AS 1992. THE GUERRILLA FIGHTERS HAVE NOW BEEN REPLACED BY BLUE-UNIFORMED "TAMIL EELAM POLICE." THE LIGHTLY-ARMED POLICE DIRECT TRAFFIC (MOSTLY BICYCLES), RECORD STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC AND INVESTIGATE CRIMES "JUST LIKE IN COLOMBO," ACCORDING TO THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT. THE INSPECTOR GENERAL WHO HEADS THE FORCE IS A FORMER CONSTABLE IN THE SRI LANKAN POLICE.

4. THE POLICE ARE BACKSTOPPED BY THE LTTE "JUSTICE DIVISION," WHICH RUNS FOUR DISTRICT COURTS AND ONE APPELLATE COURT. LTTE "JUDGES"--ALL FORMER GUERRILLAS--HEAR CASES AND HAND DOWN JUDGMENTS FROM THE BENCH. ACCORDING TO THE BBC CORRESPONDENT, THESE JUDGES RECEIVE SIX MONTHS OF LEGAL TRAINING IN AN LTTE "LAW COLLEGE" BEFORE TAKING OVER THEIR DUTIES. EACH JUDGE ALSO HAS A "LEGAL ADVISOR," GENERALLY A RETIRED GOVERNMENT ATTORNEY. THE JUDGES THEMSELVES TEND TO BE YOUNG, IN THEIR LATE 20'S OR EARLY 30'S. THE ONE APPEALS COURT JUDGE IS A WOMAN. THE BBC AND THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENTS AGREED THAT THE COURTS SEEMED TO BE HANDLING BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES IN A STRAIGHTFORWARD LEGAL MANNER.

5. ON THEIR ARRIVAL IN JAFFNA, THE JOURNALISTS'

BAGS WERE CHECKED BY LTTE CUSTOMS OFFICERS AND THEIR PAPERS WERE EXAMINED BY LTTE IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS. CHECKING WAS THOROUGH; IT TOOK THE OFFICIALS THREE HOURS TO CLEAR THE 150 PEOPLE WHO ARRIVED ON AN ICRC BOAT FROM TRINCOMALEE. NO PASSENGERS WERE ALLOWED OUT OF THE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION HALL UNTIL THEIR BONA FIDES WERE ESTABLISHED AND THEY HAD PAID ALL APPLICABLE DUTIES ON THE GOODS THEY BROUGHT FROM THE SOUTH.

¶6. THE LTTE HAS RECENTLY OPENED BANKS IN JAFFNA AND OTHER NORTHERN TOWNS. UNLIKE THE BRANCH OFFICES OF COLOMBO BANKS, WHICH ONLY TAKE DEPOSITS, THE "BANK OF TAMIL EELAM" ALSO PROVIDES LOANS TO FARMERS AND SMALL BUSINESSMEN. THE TIGERS HAVE MOUNTED A MAJOR PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO PUT THEIR MONEY IN THE LTTE BANKS. THE MAIN SELLING POINT IS THAT THE NEW BANKS WILL RECYCLE MONEY INTO THE COMMUNITY RATHER THAN (AS IS NOW THE CASE) TAKING IT OUT OF THE PENINSULA. THE MANAGER OF THE BANK OF TAMIL EELAM IS A RETIRED BANK OF CEYLON OFFICIAL.

¶7. THE EXISTENCE OF THE LTTE-RUN "TAMIL EELAM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION" (TEEDO) IS ANOTHER SIGN THAT THE TIGERS ARE STRIVING FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY. TEEDO IS CHARGED WITH FINDING ALTERNATIVE LOCAL SOURCES OF SUPPLY FOR "BANNED" ITEMS EMBARGOED BY THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT. IT HAS REPORTEDLY HELPED SET UP SMALL-SCALE MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES TO PRODUCE AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS, BOTTLED SOFT DRINKS AND OTHER HARD-TO-FIND ITEMS. TEEDO ALSO OFFERS CASH INCENTIVES TO PEOPLE WHO COME UP WITH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE EMBARGO. ONE SUCH AWARD RECENTLY WENT TO A MAN WHO PERFECTED A WAY OF USING "BIO GAS" TO RUN HIS TRACTOR.

¶8. ACCORDING TO THE TWO JOURNALISTS AS WELL AS THE BISHOP, ALL ITEMS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S "BANNED LIST" ARE FREELY AVAILABLE IN JAFFNA, THOUGH OFTEN AT PRICES SEVERAL TIMES THOSE IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. "PENLIGHT BATTERIES, CHOCOLATES, ANYTHING YOU CAN FIND IN COLOMBO YOU CAN FIND IN JAFFNA," SAID THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT. RETAILERS SIMPLY PASS THE EXTRA COST OF SMUGGLED ITEMS ON TO THE CONSUMER, WHILE THE LTTE ALSO EXACTS ITS CUT. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF GOLD MERCHANTS, ALL SHOPS AND BUSINESSES PAY THE TIGERS A TWO PERCENT TAX ON GROSS SALES. GOLD MERCHANTS PAY 4 PERCENT.

¶9. ELECTRICITY, SHUT OFF BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN 1990, IS NOW SUPPLIED BY LTTE GENERATORS TO SOME 15,000 COMMERCIAL SUBSCRIBERS. RATES ARE SAID TO BE TWENTY TIMES THOSE IN COLOMBO: 100 RUPEES (USD 2.00) A UNIT VERSUS 5 RUPEES A UNIT. SOME SHOPS, HOTELS AND NEWSPAPERS HAVE THEIR OWN GENERATORS WHICH RUN ON A MIXTURE OF KEROSENE AND VEGETABLE OIL. THE LTTE ALSO HAS ITS OWN 200-LINE FIELD TELEPHONE SYSTEM, ACCESS TO WHICH IS SO FAR LIMITED TO LTTE OFFICES AND OTHER KEY INSTALLATIONS.

¶10. LTTE SPOKESMAN ANTON BALASINGHAM TOLD THE VISITING JOURNALISTS THAT THE TIGERS' SEE NEWLY-INDEPENDENT ERITREA AS THE MODEL FOR THEIR OWN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE. BY SETTING UP CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN AREAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL AND WORKING TOWARD ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY, THE TIGERS HOPE TO ACHIEVE DE FACTO SOVEREIGNTY. WHEN THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WAS STILL RUNNING SCHOOLS, STAFFING HOSPITALS AND DISTRIBUTING FOOD IN THE NORTH, BALASINGHAM REPORTEDLY SHRUGGED AND SAID "WE CAN'T DO THAT, SO WE LET THE GOVERNMENT DO IT."

¶11. ON THE MILITARY FRONT, THE TIGERS ARE PREPARING FOR A MAJOR ARMY ASSAULT ON JAFFNA. TRAVELERS REPORT THAT THE LTTE IS DIGGING TRENCHES AND PREPARING DEFENSES THROUGHOUT THE PENINSULA. THE

LTTE ALSO REPORTEDLY REQUIRES EVERY FAMILY IN JAFFNA TO PROVIDE A NUMBER OF HOURS OF FREE LABOR EVERY MONTH. EACH FAMILY HAS BEEN ISSUED A "LABOR CARD" TO BE STAMPED BY THE TIGERS UPON COMPLETION OF THE FAMILY'S REQUIRED CONTRIBUTION. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE LULL IN FIGHTING SINCE LAST YEAR'S BATTLE AT POONERYN, BALASINGHAM EXPLAINED THAT "BOTH SIDES" HAD SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES AND WERE IN THE PROCESS OF RECRUITING AND TRAINING NEW FIGHTERS. WHEN THE BISHOP QUERIED BALASINGHAM ABOUT THE LTTE'S ABILITY TO WITHSTAND A FULL-SCALE ARMY ASSAULT ON JAFFNA, BALASINGHAM TOLD THE BISHOP NOT TO FORGET THAT "WE STILL HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO STRIKE COLOMBO. OUR BOYS ARE THERE."

¶12. BALASINGHAM SAID THAT THE LTTE DID NOT ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT THE LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE BECAUSE THE POLLS WERE "NOT IMPORTANT" AND THE COST OF DISRUPTING THEM WOULD HAVE BEEN HIGH, BOTH IN TERMS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND LTTE RESOURCES. HE WENT ON TO TELL THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT THAT THE TIGERS WOULD NOT VIEW THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL AND GENERAL ELECTIONS WITH SUCH EQUANIMITY. "OUR OFFICIAL POSITION," SAID BALASINGHAM, "IS THAT WE ARE OPPOSED TO THE HOLDING OF ANY ELECTION IN THE NORTH AND EAST UNLESS AND UNTIL A POLITICAL SOLUTION IS WORKED OUT TO THE SATISFACTION OF OUR PEOPLE." THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT TOLD POLOFF THAT BALASINGHAM SAID OFF THE RECORD THAT THE TIGERS WOULD WITHOUT QUESTION DISRUPT THE POLLS IN THE EAST.

¶13. ACCORDING TO THE JOURNALISTS' ADMITTEDLY UNSCIENTIFIC SURVEY OF THE JAFFNA CITIZENRY, SUPPORT FOR THE LTTE REMAINS FAIRLY STRONG. THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT ATTRIBUTED SOME OF THIS SUPPORT TO THE MILITANTS' LOW PUBLIC PROFILE AND THE GENERALLY FAVORABLE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NEW CIVIL ADMINISTRATION. "PEOPLE ADMIRE THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LTTE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE AND APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT THEY ARE NOT HARASSED," HE SAID. THE BBC CORRESPONDENT SAID THAT THE GENERAL LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR THE LTTE HAS "MORE THAN I EXPECTED." BOTH CORRESPONDENTS AGREED WITH THE BISHOP'S STATEMENT THAT GIVEN A CHOICE BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE LTTE, THE MAJORITY OF JAFFNA RESIDENTS WOULD CHOOSE THE LATTER.

¶14. THE POPULAR PERCEPTION OF THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT AS ANTI-TAMIL IS REINFORCED BY THE APPARENTLY RANDOM MANNER IN WHICH THE ARMY LOBS ARTILLERY SHELLS INTO JAFFNA. THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT RECOUNTED TWO SUCH INCIDENTS WHICH OCCURRED DURING THE WEEK HE HAS IN JAFFNA. IN ONE CASE A SHELL LANDED IN A CROWDED FISH MARKET, KILLING TWO CIVILIANS AND WOUNDING SEVENTEEN. TWO DAYS BEFORE, A WOMAN AND HER TWO CHILDREN WERE INJURED WHEN A ROUND FELL ON THEIR HOUSE WHILE THEY WERE SLEEPING. "I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY DO THIS," THE REUTERS MAN SAID, "BECAUSE THE LTTE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE CAMPS IN THE AREAS BEING SHELLED."

¶15. COMMENT. THE LTTE'S FREQUENT INVOCATION OF THE "ERITREA" MANTRA CONVENIENTLY LEAVES OUT THE FACT THAT ERITREA ACHIEVED ITS INDEPENDENCE BECAUSE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS ABABA COLLAPSED; THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT IS UNLIKELY TO FOLLOW SUIT. NONETHELESS, THE BURGEONING TIGER CIVIL ADMINISTRATION INDICATES THAT THE LTTE IS STEADILY WORKING TO MAKE "TAMIL EELAM" A FACT. END COMMENT.